

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 688

JC 840 064

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TITLE A Five-Stage Marketing Typology for Community Colleges.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Administration; Community Colleges; *School Holding Power; *Student Recruitment; Two Year Colleges

IDENTIFIERS *Educational Marketing

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a review of pertinent marketing literature and observations of how selected colleges undertake marketing efforts, this paper presents a five-stage typology of community colleges according to their marketing orientation. For the five stages, each representing an increasingly integrated approach to marketing, the paper analyzes how marketing planning and control are conducted, how marketing information or intelligence is gathered, and how marketing personnel and activities are organized and coordinated. It also examines specific recruiting and retention strategies associated with each stage as a way of indicating the vigor of a college's marketing effort and the nature or emphasis of its marketing orientation. Finally, a chart summarizes the typology by looking at five dimensions (i.e., marketing philosophy, information system, organization system, planning and control system, and activities) for each stage (i.e., traditional college, selling-oriented college, marketing-oriented college, total-marketing college, and integrated-marketing college). (LAL)

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A FIVE-STAGE MARKETING TYPOLOGY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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A FIVE-STAGE MARKETING TYPOLOGY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

An Abstract

While there is a growing interest in marketing techniques for community colleges, many administrators do not fully understand the concepts or procedures recommended for accomplishing their marketing goals. Additionally, researchers are faced with the problem of quantifying differences between colleges in terms of their marketing efforts. For these reasons, a five-stage marketing typology for community colleges has been developed.

According to Hoy and Miskel, organizational typologies are useful because they focus attention on important structural and functional similarities between organizations and help explain behavior. In the typology presented, derived in large part from business-sector models developed by Philip Kotler, five stages in community college marketing orientation are identified: traditional college, selling-oriented college, marketing-oriented college, total-marketing college, and integrated-marketing college. The stages are based upon five marketing-orientation dimensions: marketing philosophy, marketing information system, marketing organization system, marketing planning and control system, and specific marketing activities.

The typology presented in this article is derived from a review of pertinent marketing literature and observations of selected community colleges. Future research concerning the marketing orientations of community colleges based upon the typology will determine the extent of its accuracy and value.

A FIVE-STAGE MARKETING TYPOLOGY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Douglas O. Dollar

Community college administrators today are faced with a great amount of sometimes conflicting information regarding marketing. Evidence exists that while there is a growing interest in the use of marketing techniques for community colleges, many administrators do not fully understand the concepts or procedures recommended for accomplishing their marketing goals.¹

In attempting to relate marketing practices in community colleges to such things as enrollments, researchers are faced with the problem of quantifying, in a meaningful way, differences between colleges in terms of their marketing efforts. For these reasons, the five-stage marketing **typology** for community colleges presented in this article was developed.

According to Hoy and Miskel, "Organizational typologies are useful because they focus attention on important structural and functional similarities between organizations and help explain behavior." Typologies allow for comparative study of diverse organizations. Primarily descriptive rather than explanatory, good typologies are logical, consistent with theory, and comprehensive.²

Kotler and Goldgehn described marketing in the community college as an eight-step process during which such activities as defining the mission, identifying publics and markets, researching the market, and implementing and controlling marketing plans take place.³ Kotler also has identified the main aspects of the marketing process for both profit and non-profit organizations emphasizing the importance of marketing program administration.⁴

For purposes of this typology, it was decided that a meaningful examination of community colleges in terms of their marketing orientation can be made by analyzing the marketing administrative effort, that is, how marketing planning

and control is conducted, how marketing information or intelligence is gathered, and how marketing personnel and activities are organized and coordinated.⁵ Also, an examination of specific recruiting and retention activities employed by colleges is useful in such a study since the activities actually underway tend to indicate the vigor of a college's marketing effort and the nature or emphasis of a college's marketing orientation.⁶

Finally, the importance of presidential leadership to any marketing effort has been stressed, and represents an important aspect of marketing orientation.⁷ Therefore, the marketing philosophy evident in an institution as expounded by the president has been considered in the typology.⁸

A five-stage typology of community colleges according to marketing orientation follows. A summary table is provided to guide the reader.

Stage One: The Traditional College

Two marketing philosophies are typically found in the traditional college which has operated in a seller's market. In the first philosophy, which emphasizes the production concept, administrators assume that prospective students prefer those educational offerings that are available and that they can afford. Making production and distribution more efficient, through, for example, larger classes or lower paid faculty, becomes very important.

A philosophy more common in higher education, which emphasizes the product concept, is that prospective students desire educational products that offer the greatest quality for the price. This philosophy includes the idea that students buy educational products rather than solutions to meet needs, and that students understand the feature and quality differences of competing academic programs. It is assumed that prospective students will continue to want a college's product, despite increasing alternatives.

In terms of a formal marketing administrative effort, marketing information,

organization, and planning and control are practically non-existent, as a result of the above philosophies. No organized effort to gather or retain market information is evident. Marketing decisions are thus based on intuition, casual observations, or statements made by admissions personnel or prospective students. When a college and its service area is small and its representatives are close to prospective students and to those enrolled in the college, the institution appears to be quite successful without a formal marketing information system.

Additionally, no formal marketing organization will exist, with the admissions, registrar, alumni, financial aids, and other offices performing essentially uncoordinated recruiting activities and few, if any, retention activities. In terms of planning, administrators in the traditional college are usually so busy with day-to-day activities, they have little time for formal planning. Engrossed in operations required for survival, they do not allow for a planning staff.

Specific marketing activities in a stage-one college will be limited to a few traditional recruiting activities such as newspaper news stories, college catalogs, course schedules for the college term, information flyers, high school visits, and campus visitation days. Retention activities are typically limited to advising, usually by faculty on a part-time basis.

Stage Two: The Selling-Oriented College

Usually motivated by increased competition or declining enrollments, the college in the second stage becomes more sophisticated in some aspects of promotion. The administration's philosophy assumes that prospective students will not enroll in sufficient numbers unless a strong effort is made to overcome their lack of interest in the college's offerings. Committed to an established curriculum and having hired a faculty and built a physical plant, administration in the selling-oriented college may spend a great deal of money for promotional

activities, especially if the college has experienced a sudden drop in enrollments. The college's offerings are portrayed as being tremendous for all students, and any shortcomings of the college are simply not mentioned since the aim is to attract more students, not to worry about retention.

Due to these new pressures and marketing philosophy, the marketing administrative effort is improved. Usually, as the college begins to grow, and college representatives become removed from their clients, the need for more refined methods of understanding what is taking place in terms of the college's marketing efforts is realized. An internal records system may then be established, consisting of data on enrollments, drop-outs, class sizes, faculty workloads, student records and characteristics, alumni records and the like.

In terms of marketing organization, recruiting activities are still mainly uncoordinated except that promotional activities are examined and planned more carefully. Individual departments, however, still often produce messages which conflict with a total institutional image. Some "specialists" may be added to the staff to enhance selling of the product. In planning, a marketing budgeting system may be instituted in which administration, for example, estimates total enrollments for the coming year and the expected costs and revenues associated with this enrollment level.

The only marketing activities employed, in addition to those mentioned in stage one, are recruiting such as newspaper and television advertisements, television news stories, posters, billboards, or word of mouth promotion. In stage two colleges, retention is not yet recognized as a useful avenue for affecting enrollments.

Stage Three: The Marketing-Oriented College

As an institution becomes more complex, primarily through increased size, and due to greater competition, there is an awareness within the college of the

necessity to begin to pay attention to student needs and demands. For the first time, administration attends to the marketing concept which holds that "the key to achieving organizational goals consists of determining the needs and wants of target markets and adapting the organization to delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than its competitors."⁹

In terms of marketing administration, college managers may realize a need to obtain data about what is happening in the environment in order to interpret recruiting and retention results and to become aware of new problems and opportunities. At this point, a formal marketing intelligence system begins to take shape. While managers before relied mainly on publications as well as associates for outside information, more emphasis is placed on having admissions and recruiting personnel pass on information about prospective students and drop-outs. Special marketing intelligence services may be utilized such as lists of foundations and the grants they offer, student scores and profiles from ACT.

The most visible change within the marketing organization is the appointment of what is essentially a marketing director with a limited role oriented to promotion and recruitment, fund raising and alumni. The college will enter a stage of annual planning and a crude marketing plan may develop. The identification of prospective students in terms of different homogenous groups with unique needs (market segmentation) and subsequent variation of appeals (differentiated marketing) may be initiated.¹⁰ Much more attention is given to coordination of the promotion effort.

New recruitment activities may include offering programs at locations other than campus, additional new credit and noncredit program offerings, and offering courses through television, radio, or newspapers. For the first time, retention is considered important and new strategies may include the improvement or redevelopment of academic advising programs, establishment of early warning

systems for identification and communicating with potential dropouts or stopouts, new or revitalized extracurricular activities, expanded academic support/enrichment/learning services, expanded placement services, **faculty**/instructional development programs, and student exit interviews.

Stage Four: The Total-Marketing College

Often, in stage-three colleges, the marketing concept is professed, but not practiced, or even understood, fully. Either through declining enrollments or exposure to more sophisticated marketing concepts, a college will move from a short-run to a long-run marketing orientation (stage four). The broader implications of marketing are recognized, and institutional leaders become more desirous of the substance as well as the form of marketing in the institution's programs. Leaders are increasingly savvy in terms of marketing concepts, and are concerned about creating value in the college's products, but encounter problems of change within the college.¹¹

Concerning marketing administration, the college eventually arrives at a point where the demand for marketing information requires the institution to initiate specific studies of problem and opportunity areas. A formal marketing research system is implemented during this stage. Marketing Director Miles Eckert reports that at Odessa (Texas) Junior College, a series of committees first analyze a wide range of enrollment influences including economic markets, cultural markets, recruitment, retention, foundation and resources, future programming, promotion, and image. These committees collect data from various campus surveys, community surveys, federal reports, department of labor statistics, regional planning commission research studies, and chamber of commerce research studies. After analysis of the data, the committees make marketing recommendations **which are designed to** help the colleges achieve a better match with the potential student population.

Throughout the organization, the marketing vice president gains control, or at least influence, over a wider range of recruiting, retention, placement and alumni and development activities. A retention coordinator and a retention steering committee may appear. The college enters a strategic-planning phase in which the planning system is enhanced to improve overall marketing effectiveness.¹² Long-range planning is implemented, for example, with the introduction of a rolling five-year plan from which the annual marketing plan is derived.

The plans move from a simpler stage in which they contain mostly statistics and specific tactical actions to a more advanced planning system in which the plans contain a section on strategy. Prince George's Community College (Maryland) Dean of Students Ernest Leach, in his capacity as marketing director, develops a marketing plan which, among other things, outlines market trends such as an increase in older and minority clients, an analysis of the competition, and high school students' perceptions of the college. In addition to identifying target groups of prospective students and marketing activities aimed at each group, the plan presents an overall long-range strategy for Prince George's role within the community. Strategies and tactics are designed to meet 16 long-range institutional goals. With such a perspective, notes Leach, the marketing process becomes a means of achieving organizational objectives and of designing the organization's offerings in terms of the target markets' needs and desires.

Also in stage four, an attempt is made to standardize the plan formats so that the efforts of similar units can be compared. Customer behavior analyses are consulted, an audit of the marketing operation is conducted, the college's offerings are more broadly defined (generic product definition),¹³ and the college strives to fill needs unmet by other institutions (marketing positioning.)¹⁴

New recruiting activities include periodic improvement of and elimination of some programs, and offering special group tuition rates. Retention activities

attempted include special orientation activities, curricular innovations in credit programs, special counseling programs, special or required services for students who have not declared a major, special admissions materials and procedures designed to improve student-institutional fit, use of students as peer advisers and counselors, and special services designed to retain adult learners.

Stage Five: The Integrated Marketing College

Institutions of higher education which enter the stage-five marketing orientation realize their obligations to society's interests as well as to consumer wants and the college's own interests. Administrators recognize that, in earlier marketing orientations, they may have ignored the frequent conflicts between immediate consumer wants and long-run societal welfare. In this stage, educators have no doubt that they are responsible for a major deciding role in such issues as strictly career and pragmatic education versus a liberal or life-enhancing education. While profit companies may not be expected to absorb losses in the pursuit of societal marketing, institutions of higher education may well have an obligation to accept such setbacks when societal interests are at issue. Though this marketing philosophy may be present in earlier marketing orientations, it is a necessary condition in stage five.

As for administration of the marketing program, the ultimate state-of-the-art stage in a college's marketing information system is achieved when computer simulation models are used to predict the consequences of various product, pricing, distribution, retention or promotion strategies. College administrators now seek to develop a sound mix of marketing activities, and deal with the great uncertainty caused by the separate and joint effects of various activities. For example, in allocating recruiting funds, a university may need to decide if it should concentrate in the proven area in which it is already successful or in contested or new areas. A formal marketing management science system is thus

established, completing all the components of a marketing information system. Continuous marketing information feedback occurs through several channels in the institution.¹⁵

In earlier stages, a college may develop sophisticated marketing apparatus employing advanced marketing strategies, yet only the administrators and certain staff highly involved in marketing activities may be fully committed to the total marketing concept. Until essentially all faculty and staff members within the institution see themselves as part of the marketing organization--and not a selling effort--the college cannot fully operate in an effective marketing posture.

Institutional leaders must succeed in implementing change within the college and initiate a long-run orientation in terms of products offered. Kathleen Orozco was recently appointed to the newly created position of associate vice president of marketing at Moraine Valley Community College (Illinois). Orozco, who often consults with educational institutions that desire to initiate a marketing orientation, came to Moraine Valley because the new position offered the type of control she knew was necessary for a total marketing program. Nevertheless, the new vice president sees marketing as a long-range process in which faculty and staff will be educated through marketing seminars and activities of such offices as admissions, publications, alumni and the work of marketing committees will be gradually integrated through her office.

As the planning culture matures in the college, marketing managers justify their recommendations not only in total enrollment terms, but in terms of such considerations as the optimum institution size, a student socio-economic mix to enhance educational experiences, and the college's contribution to community wellbeing. Contingency plans are created for response to major threats or opportunities. Integrated market planning, in which all members of the organization recognize they are a part of the marketing process, takes place.¹⁶

Marketing audits are conducted periodically and upon special occasions as when expansion is anticipated. Bud **Weidenthal**, vice president for public affairs and information at Cuyahoga Community College (Ohio), notes that Cuyahoga has traditionally conducted well-planned marketing audits, especially to help launch a new venture. When Cuyahoga's eastern campus was to be established, the college made an extensive audit of the marketing environment seeking to establish the status of the markets, the customers, the competitors, the macroenvironment, and of the college's marketing organization and programs.

In terms of marketing activities, training programs to develop a client orientation in staff and faculty members are developed, **formal** inclusion of advising **effectiveness** in faculty promotion and tenure decisions occurs, new and innovative action programs in both retention and recruitment, placement and volunteerism, **may** arise.

Conclusions

In summary, the preceding typology is based upon a review of pertinent marketing literature and observation of how select colleges go about the marketing effort. The initial **stage of the typology** (the Traditional College) exists today **for** close examination. The later stages of the typology (Total-Marketing College, for example) are suggested by marketing efforts in the profit sector, and may not yet exist in community colleges.

It should be assumed **that** a given college may not be operating in the same stage (or level) for each **of** the various marketing-orientation dimensions. The typology is intended as a comparative guide and an aid to achieving quicker insight into the marketing process in community colleges. Future research concerning the marketing orientations of community colleges based upon the preceding typology will determine the extent of the accuracy and value of the **typology**.

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- ⁸For an examination of a typology of marketing philosophies for the profit sector see Kotler, Principles of Marketing, p. 20.
- ⁹Kotler, Principles of Marketing, p. 25.
- ¹⁰For an illustration of how segmentation and differentiated marketing work together, see William M. Bassin, "A Marketing Technique for Student Recruitment," Research in Higher Education, 3, (1975), pp. 51-65.

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- ¹²Kotler, Principles of Marketing, p. 100.
- ¹³For the original discussion of the generic product definition see Theodore Levitt, "Marketing Myopia," Harvard Business Review, 1960, pp. 45-56.
- ¹⁴See Howard Geltzer and Al Ries, "The Positioning Era: A Marketing Strategy for College Admissions in the 1980s," A Role for Marketing in College Admissions, New York, 1976, p. 73.
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- ¹⁶See Lucas, Developing a Total Marketing Plan, p. 58.

Table 1. Summary of College Marketing Typology

	DIMENSION A MARKETING PHILOSOPHY	DIMENSION B MARKETING INFORMATION SYSTEM	DIMENSION C MARKETING ORGANIZATION SYSTEM	DIMENSION D MARKETING PLANNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM	DIMENSION E MARKETING ACTIVITIES
STAGE 1 TRADITIONAL COLLEGE	Production Concept and/or Product Concept	Intuition or Casual Observation	Several offices performing uncoordinated recruiting activities.	Engrossed in day-to-day operations required for survival.	Traditional recruiting such as news releases, catalogues, flyers, high school visits.
STAGE 2 SELLING-ORIENTED COLLEGE	Selling Concept	Internal Records System	Specialists added to staff, and more attention to promotion.	Budgeting System	Newspaper and TV advertisements, billboards, added.
STAGE 3 MARKETING- ORIENTED COLLEGE	Marketing Concept	Formal Marketing Intelligence System Added	Marketing vice-president added with limited role— coordinates recruitment.	Annual planning, market segmentation and differentiation added.	New courses added and offered at new locations, offered through new media, and some retention activities begun.
STAGE 4 TOTAL-MARKETING COLLEGE	Total-Marketing Concept	Formal Marketing Research System Added	Marketing vice-president increases influence over college activities. Retention coordinator and/or steering committee added.	Strategic-planning phase with long-range planning through five-year plan.	Improvement and/or elimination of courses and special tuition rates, attempts to improve retention through counsel- ing, better student-college fit, etc.
STAGE 5 INTEGRATED- MARKETING COLLEGE	Societal-Marketing Concept	Formal Marketing Management Science System Added Modeling and Simulation	All members of institution committed to marketing concept.	Marketing results measured by rate of return. Contingency Plans Integrated Marketing Planning.	Client centered training programs for staff and faculty, advising effort considered for promotion, more new and innovative activities.